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FOURTH SECTION
COMMITTEE "H"
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ADVANCED COURSE
1927-28

OPERATIONS
OF THE
NINTH INFANTRY, SECOND DIVISION (U.S.)
IN THE THIRD PHASE, MEUSE-ARGONNE
NOVEMBER 1 - 11, 1918

CAPTAIN ROY C. HILTON, INFANTRY.

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| Official Record | - The Ninth U. S. Infantry in the World War. (Good source, but rather brief and incomplete regarding details.) |

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| Beach | "Field Message" |
| Corey | "Night Marches of Second Division through German Lines, etc." |
| Hilton | "Operations' Report, M. G. Co., 9th Infantry" |
| Lejeune | "Operations' Report of Second Division West of the Meuse, November 1 - 11, 1918" |
| Pers. Exp. | "Personal Experience" |
| Van Horn | "Report of Operations, 9th Infantry, November 1 - 11, 1918" |
| 2nd Div. Hist. | "Summary of Operations, Second Division, November 1 - 11, 1918" |
| Rec. 2nd Div. | "Records of the Second Division (Reg.)" |
| 9th Inf. Hist. | "The Ninth U. S. Infantry in the World War" |

INTRODUCTION

In order to discuss intelligently the operations of the 9th Infantry, it is necessary to discuss, in general, the operations of other units of the division of which this regiment formed a part, and to mention, at times, the location of adjacent units. I shall, therefore, mention at this time the other organizations with which I shall deal in this discussion.

The 9th Infantry constituted part of the 3rd Infantry Brigade, 2nd Division (Reg.) during its participation in the World War. The remainder of this brigade was made up by the 23rd Infantry and the 5th Machine Gun Battalion. The 4th Infantry Brigade, 2nd Division, was composed of the 5th and 6th Regiments of Marines and the 6th Machine Gun Battalion (Marines). During the operation of November 1 - 11, 1918, the units on the right of the 2nd Division were those of the 89th Division, and units on the left were those of the 80th Division to November 6th, then those of the 1st Division.

By November 1, 1918, the 9th Infantry had become a veteran regiment, seasoned by several severe and successful campaigns against veteran German troops. (1) It had just completed a tour of duty with the Fourth French Army, under General Gourand, where it experienced severe fighting from October 3rd to 9th, inclusive, and suffered a casualty list of thirty-two (32) officers and nine hundred and four (904) enlisted men. It had won the right to have inscribed upon its banner the names of Chateau-Thierry, Soissons, St. Mihiel and Blanc-Mont, all brilliant victories in which this regiment had played an important role.

(1) Pers. Exp.

~~It had won an enviable reputation for its fighting~~

ability which it expected to uphold. The campaign of November 1 - 11, 1918, was destined to add more glory to the pages of its history by its unique method of penetrating deep into the enemy line.

ENEMY SITUATION AND PLAN OF ATTACK

(2) 2nd Div. Hist.

The German positions within the 2nd Division sector ran along the Kriemhilde Stellung, roughly the line through St. Georges and Landres et St. Georges with their outposts pushed up the ridge south of the latter place. (2) The 52nd German Division held this line, with reserve units organized in depth. Although this line was not extensively organized with trenches, it contained numerous machine guns and utilized fully the natural strength of the terrain. (See map)

(3) Rec. 2nd Div.,
Vol. 1,
F. O. No. 49

The plan of the 2nd Division for the attack on November 1st provided for an attack in column of brigades, 4th Brigade in assault and 3rd Brigade in reserve. (3) The 23rd Infantry was to attack abreast the 4th Brigade in the right half of the division sector ~~to the left of the 4th Brigade, then to proceed to the left~~ Brigade. Elaborate arrangements were made for artillery and machine gun barrages preliminary to and during the initial stage of the attack. All units were to be in position by 2:00 A.M., November 1st, for the attack at 5:30 A.M.

OPERATION ON NOVEMBER 1ST

The 9th Infantry, commanded by Colonel R. O. Van Horn, with headquarters at Sommerance, was ordered to follow the 6th Marines at about one kilometer, in column

(4) Rec. 2nd Div.,
Vol. 2
F. O. No. 42

(5) Rec. 2nd Div.,
Vol. 2
F. O. No. 44

(6) Rec. 2nd Div.,
Vol. 2
Memo. No. 25

of battalions, in the left of the division sector as division reserve. (4) It was assigned the mission of protecting the left flank of the division against hostile counter-attack. (5)

The Machine Gun Company, 9th Infantry, commanded by Captain Roy C. Hilton, had been placed under the orders of the Commanding Officer, 5th Machine Gun Battalion for barrage work, and was ordered to join the Third Battalion of its regiment upon completion of this mission. (6) This company was assigned three areas within the enemy lines upon which a barrage was to be placed from position about sixteen hundred meters south of Landres at St. Georges, on reverse slope of ridge. (See map) The targets included a road and woods one kilometer northeast of St. Georges; western edge of Bois des Hazois and slope of hill to ravine west thereof; ravine, road and railroad four hundred meters south of Bois des Hazois. All of these targets were

~~many positions on available counter-attack areas. This~~
barrage started at 3:30 A.M. (H - 2 hrs.) and continued until 6:00 A.M. (H + 30 min.) These targets were engaged one at a time from data calculated and checked the previous day, the farthest target being engaged from 6:00 to 6:30 A.M. in order to clear our attacking troops. About 40,000 rounds of ammunition were fired on these areas by 6:00 A.M., at which time the company left the barrage position to join the Third Battalion. (7)

(7) Hilton

By the time the Machine Gun Company reached the place designated to join the Third Battalion, not later than 6:30 A.M., the regiment was already moving forward

in rear of the 6th Marines in the order, Third, First and Second Battalions, with a distance of about five hundred yards between battalions. Companies "C" and "D", 5th Machine Gun Battalion, were attached to the Second and First Battalions, 9th Infantry, respectively. In this formation the regiment followed the 6th Marines at about one kilometer until the assaulting brigade reached its final objective for the day. This placed the leading (third) battalion along the ravine just west of Bayonville et Chennery with the other battalions in their same relative positions along this ravine, where all dug in for the day. In this position the regiment suffered some casualties from enemy artillery fire and fire from enemy snipers on the left flank. Units of the 80th Division had not advanced abreast our division, so the 9th Infantry sent patrols toward the left flank which captured or killed the snipers who were causing casualties among our troops.

OPERATIONS ON NOVEMBER 2ND

The next day, November 2nd, found this regiment in division reserve in the same position it had occupied on the previous day. This situation was to change before the day had passed. At about 1:00 P.M. orders were received for this regiment to relieve the 5th Regiment of Marines on the right of the division sector. (8) The 23rd Infantry was to relieve the 6th Regiment of Marines on our left. In preparation to making this relief, Lieutenant Colonel Corey, who was attached to the 9th Infantry, and the battalion commanders of this regiment made a reconnaissance of the position held by the 5th

(8) Rec. 2nd Div.,
Vol. 1,
F. O. No. 51

(9) 2nd Div. Hist.
F.O. No. 45,
3rd Brigade

Marines in a drizzling rain in the afternoon. Just about the time the regiment had started forward to make this relief, a change of orders was received directing the 3rd Brigade to advance through the position held by the 4th Brigade, regiments abreast, 9th Infantry on the right, to the heights beyond the Exploitation line. (9) The leading battalions of both regiments were ordered to cross the position held by the 4th Brigade at 8:00 P.M., move by night for a distance of about two kilometers beyond this line, organize the heights just north of the line Nouart - - Fossé and prepare for a vigorous pursuit.

The execution of this order to advance into enemy territory at night was both interesting and exciting. Of the three battalion commanders to execute this order in the 9th Infantry, one was a young captain - Captain Platner, commanding the First Battalion; the other two - Major Day, commanding the Second Battalion, was about twenty-three years of age, and Major Yanda, commanding the Third Battalion, was about twenty-one years of age, and both had just received their promotions to the grade of Major. This will give an indication of the general condition of commissioned and non-commissioned personnel in the regiment made necessary by the great number of casualties it had suffered at Blanc Mont.

As previously stated, the Exploitation line (Nouart - Fossé) was about two kilometers beyond the line held by our 4th Brigade. The 4th Brigade had sent patrols toward this line during the day but these patrols had been roughly handled by the enemy and had been withdrawn at 7:00 P.M.

(10) Corey

It was getting dark as this regiment moved through the Marine outposts in the order First, Second and Third Battalions. This movement was made by marching in column of twos along the Bayonville - Nouart road toward the north to the line then held, thence northeast. As we came to the outguards of the 5th Marines, we were informed that the enemy was still occupying the area to their immediate front, as we soon found to be true. (10) At this point the leading company (Co. "A") sent forward a patrol of several selected men and the regiment moved slowly forward. Our patrol was only about one hundred yards in advance of the column and could just be seen from the head of the column. The column then moved through a cut in the road of considerable length with banks five or six feet high on both sides. As the head of the column emerged from this cut and came out into the open, it ran into an enemy outguard of six or eight men. There

(11) Corey

~~was an explosion of some kind in the road.~~
patrol made use of a Browning Automatic rifle picked up from the 36th Division, which had relieved us in the Mont Blanc sector. (11) This enemy outguard was killed or captured and our column again started forward, this time protected by a platoon deployed to the front and with small flank guards from the leading company.

(12) 2nd Div. Hist.

We had advanced only a short distance when we were greeted by fire from an enemy line, estimated at about three companies, extending from the road to our left. (12) The column on the road took cover against its banks and the leading elements started firing indiscriminately.

regimental headquarters and receive a reply. The First Battalion was ordered to form for attack, followed by the Second and Third, in column of battalions. Company "I", with one machine gun platoon attached, was ordered to combine with a like unit from the 89th Division to insure liaison with this division on our right by following along division boundary.

(18) Corey

The formation for this attack was for the assault battalion to place Companies "A" and "B" in assault, with Companies "C" and "D" in reserve. Each assault company had two platoons in assault and two in support, with each platoon formed in two waves. (18) This formation allowed eight waves for each battalion or twenty-four waves for the regiment, and provided tremendous penetrating power. The boundaries between regiment were as shown on map attached hereto.

(19) Rec. 2d Div.,
Vol. 4

The objective - ridge south of Vaux-en-Dieulet, four kilometers north of Fosse - was reached about 8:15

A.M. without serious resistance. (19) Liaison was established with the 89th Division on our right and

SPLIT INFINITIVE
→

later in the day with the 23rd Infantry on our left, and the 5th Marines supported us in rear. The enemy seemed determined to not let us advance beyond this line. Heavy machine gun fire was directed at us from the front and from both flanks. Company "D" was sent to the right to reduce machine gun fire coming from le Champy Haut and a platoon was sent to la Fontain au Groncq Fme on our left for the same purpose. These units soon stopped the fire from our flanks but that to our front, which seemed to be protecting a battery of German artillery, increased in intensity. (20)

(20) Corey

(13) Corey

It required some time for the officers to stop this fire. (13) The enemy was by this time well aware of our advance into his lines. Company "A" was deployed here, moved against this position and routed the enemy. Our column halted here about midnight while a message was sent back to the regimental commander at Bayonville et Chennery stating the situation.

(14) 2nd Div. Hist.

As to the distance this column had advanced by midnight there is some question. One authority states that it reached a point 303.0 - 295.0 (See map), where it halted until 5:00 A.M., November 3rd. (14) Another statement, made by Lieutenant Colonel Corey who commanded the column, is to the effect that it reached a point about four and one-half kilometers from Bayonville et Chennery, which would be at a point about 304.1 - 296.5, almost to its objective. (15) I am inclined to favor Colonel Corey's statement since I was at the rear of the column and I believe I had just about passed our front line held by the 1st Division. I do know, however, that the column advanced a short distance early the next morning before deploying in attack formation on the line Nouart - Fossé.

(15) Corey

OPERATIONS ON NOVEMBER 3RD

(16) 2nd Div. Hist.

About 5:00 A.M., November 3rd, the column continued its advance to the jump-off line (Nouart - Fossé), with Company "A" as advance guard. (16) At 6:00 A.M. the Regimental Adjutant, Captain Otto P. Mayr, reported to Colonel Corey with orders from the regimental commander to attack at 6:00 A.M., in compliance with brigade orders. (17) It had taken about six hours to get a message back to

(17) Rec. 2d Div.,
Vol. 2
F. O. No. 46

The Second Battalion was moved up on the right and left of the First Battalion and all dug in on the reverse slope. Regimental headquarters moved up to La Fontaine au Croncq Fme. We were halted here on our objective, were receiving heavy machine gun and artillery fire and suffering heavy casualties. Something needed to be done to relieve this situation.

From the time we jumped off at six o'clock until we reached this objective a battery of German artillery could be heard firing just ahead of us. It seemed to be just over the ridge which led us to believe that it would come into view as soon as we reached the ridge ahead. There were several ridges that we advanced over and as we reached each one, the battery seemed to be just over the other. Finally, as we reached our objective about 8:15, this battery sounded only a few hundred yards ahead of us, just at the southern edge of Bois de Belval. The machine guns which were firing at us and increasing their fire from a ridge immediately to our front must have been protecting this battery, as well as making a final defensive position along the southern edge of Bois de Belval. The battery saw that our troops were getting too close for its safety, and it soon ceased fire and pulled out.

There was a good reason for the increasing of enemy machine gun fire to our front. The line now held by the enemy was known as the Red Line and ran along the crest at the south edge of Bois de Belval, thence southeast. This line was to be organized for defense by 3:00 A.M., November 3rd, and was to be held for two days⁽²⁾. In withdrawing to this line strong officer patrols were left to delay our advance. We shall see whether or not this line

(21) 2d Div. Hist. held for two days. (21)

To relieve our situation several measures were taken. The first of these was to place artillery fire on this enemy position. Our 15th Field Artillery batteries did this with good effect. Then at 12:10 P.M., the following message, in substance, was sent to the 3rd Brigade headquarters by Colonel Van Horn: "Heavy machine gun and minenwerfer fire to our immediate front - our present line: 304.5 - 300.5 - 305.5 - 305.7 - 299.7 - casualties heavy - enemy fire increasing. We could advance and occupy northern edge of woods east of Bois du Sommanthe this afternoon, in my opinion. Objective would be eight (8) kilometers from here and we would not reach it before midnight. Believe, however, it

(22) Rec. 2d Div.,
Vol. 4
9th Inf. Hist.

can be done. - - etc." (22) At 2:00 P.M. Field Orders No. 54 was issued directing the 3rd Brigade, supported by artillery, to push strong reconnaissances through the forest in front, seize a position in the vicinity of Beaumont (incl.) on left, and connect with the 89th

(23) Rec. 2d Div.,
Vol. 1
F. O. No. 54

Division on right near the north edge of Foret de Dieulet. (23)

In compliance with this order, the 3rd Brigade issued orders for the 9th Infantry and 23rd Infantry to advance in broken columns via road through Bois de Belval to north edge of woods. (24) This advance was to be supported by an artillery rolling barrage covering the roads at two hundred yards on each side, and a battery of artillery was attached to each leading battalion.

(24) Rec. 2d Div.,
Vol. 4

This regiment was to start its march through the forest and through the German lines at 2:30 P.M. However, it waited for two hours on the battery of attached artillery, which never arrived, and actually started advancing

about 4:30 P.M. The order of march was Third Battalion and Machine Gun Company, 9th Infantry, forming advance guard for the regiment, followed by the Second Battalion and First Battalion, in the order mentioned, each with one company of the 5th Machine Gun Battalion attached. As the regiment was forming in the valley by the side of the Belval - le Champy Haut road, a hail of artillery shells fell on our column causing some casualties. This expedited our formation and the column was soon on its daring mission to march about five miles through the enemy lines at night.

As the head of the advance guard approached the edge of the woods a few hundred yards south of Belval, a German machine gun opened fire on our column from each side of the road. Patrols were sent to the right and left and made short work of silencing these machine guns. When the advance guard reached Belval it was checked for a short time on account of the road being barricaded at this place. These obstacles being cleared, the column

~~moved slowly forward in column of smoke in darkness, mud,~~
and in rain which had started about this time. There was a deadly silence only broken by the slush, slush of hundreds of feet marching in the mud. There was no smoking and no straggling in this column, for everyone realized that such an act might mean disaster for the column as for himself. Our machine gunners carried their heavy guns and equipment on their back but never a murmur of complaint was heard from them. Frequent halts were made to intercept enemy detachments moving along our road and to verify our route. At each of these halts many of the men sat down in the road and fell asleep during the short

halt, as a result of their fatigue and lack of sleep for several nights.

At the head of our advance guard several German speaking soldiers had been placed to hold the necessary brief conversation with any enemy detachments encountered. Several such detachments were taken prisoners without a shot being fired.

The first body of German troops of appreciable size that was encountered was about half way through the woods, just north of La Forge Fme. There was a clearing here of seven or eight hundred yards and these troops were evidently preparing a position to fire upon our troops the next day, as they advanced across this clearing. Our column came upon these enemy troops at work, unannounced, and as the leading company of our advance guard opened fire on the enemy position, there was a mad scramble among them, much profanity and a rapid disappearance of their numbers toward Berlin. At least one of the enemy was shouting in a loud voice, "Lie down and fire", but there was little heed taken to this command and very few shots were fired on our column. Just as our firing started an automobile was heard to start up near the enemy position and disappear northward through the woods. One of the prisoners captured here stated that the car contained their officers who made haste to depart. This skirmish netted us sixty or seventy prisoners and cost us no casualties.

The next event of interest happened about one kilometer farther north as the column continued its advance. As we approached this point there were heard the voices of several teamsters steering their teams as they moved

into what appeared to be a transportation camp just to the east of our road. Other wagons and voices were heard in and around the camp. To quiet this noise and to cause some confusion in this camp, about one platoon of our leading company opened fire into this camp from the road side. Again there was a wild scramble of men and runaway teams in this camp and a rapid quieting of this place as the bulk of them disappeared eastward. This action delayed the column only a short time and it was soon moving quietly northward again. About one kilometer from the north edge of Bois de vaux - Dieulet there was a German First Aid Station which we captured without a shot being fired.

Finally, after what seemed to be an all night march, we arrived at the north edge of the forest about 10:45 P.M. Just a few hundred yards north of the edge of this forest along our route of advance and in the open was la Tuilerie Fme. There were several lights exposed in this house and from one window a signal lamp was in operation, possibly communicating with artillery in the forest. After our advance guard had taken up a position to the east of the main road and about two hundred yards to the north of this farmhouse, Major Yanda sent a strong patrol to surround this house and capture its contents. As our patrol appeared at the doors and demanded the surrender of all present, the officers and men in the house seemed utterly awe stricken to see American soldiers here. They were not difficult to persuade that the house was surrounded, as other Americans appeared in view, and we captured what

developed to be the officers and men of a minenwerfer company. All of their weapons were on the ground outside of this house.

Soon after the regiment had made its dispositions for the night and the excitement had temporarily lessened, came the important question of all American soldiers: "When do we eat?" This question had been anticipated and our supply officer, Captain McDonald, had seen to it that the ration carts follow the column with warm food and coffee. When it was announced that this food was about to be served, everyone seemed to forget that they were within the enemy lines and as the soldiers moved toward the ration carts and formed line, the rattle of mess kits and loud talking reminded one of serving a meal in training camps. Food and coffee helped our morale considerably and there was a much better spirit as our troops moved back to their positions to dig in for the night.

The disposition of the regiment for the night was as follows: headquarters at la Forge Fme; the Third Battalion holding the outpost position, a line running generally east and west about two hundred yards north of la Tuillerie Fme and extending from the main road to about five hundred yards east thereof; the Second Battalion was placed in rear of the Third and just south of the farmhouse; the First Battalion was placed from four hundred to five hundred yards in rear of the Second. Sentries and cossack posts were posted to our front and flanks and patrols were sent out. After this disposition was made all dug in and spent a quiet but sleepless night, for we knew not what the next moment would bring forth.

Thus ended our successful five mile march through the German lines.

OPERATIONS ON NOVEMBER 4TH

During the night of November 3 - 4th the 23rd Infantry came up and extended our lines westward from the road. Our right flank was still exposed. Headquarters of the Third Battalion of our regiment was located in la Tuilerie Fme.

At about 9:30 on this morning the line held by the Third Battalion was extended to the east by the Second Battalion and an attack was made to gain the high ground to our front overlooking Beaumont. As soon as this attack was launched, it was discovered that the enemy had made elaborate preparations to resist our further advance. On each side of the road, about six hundred yards northeast of la Tuilerie Fme, the enemy had placed about six machine guns. These were dug in and so located as to give grazing fire over a considerable part of our lines.

~~Other machine guns were placed on the high ground to our~~ northeast and in the woods to the east of us. As our attack started, all of these guns opened fire and played havoc with our lines. In addition to this, Richthoffen's Circus, consisting of twelve or fourteen vari-colored planes, played over our lines for some time. These planes flew very low and kept their machine guns firing at our troops as rapidly as possible. To complete this picture, the enemy artillery also added to our discomfort. In face of this resistance we suffered many casualties and were able to advance only a short distance. Our troops were for awhile literally pinned to the ground. To relieve

OPERATIONS ON NOVEMBER 5 - 6TH

There was no change in our position on November 5th, and except for a few enemy shells coming our way, there was no activity. Plans were made for another advance into enemy territory during the night.

At about 2:00 A.M., November 6th, the regiment started marching through Beaumont where the 23rd Infantry had established a line, Beaumont - Le'tanne - Hill 241. This advance was made in the order, First, Second and Third Battalions. By this advance we gained about four kilometers of ground and took up a position on the west bank of the Meuse River without suffering a casualty. The position taken up was as follows: (27) Regimental Headquarters at Beaumont; the First Battalion in position from point at 306.5 - 310.5 to la Sartelle Fme; the Second Battalion continued north and took up a position on high ground facing the river by 6:00 A.M., Companies "E" and "G" near la Sartelle Fme, Company "F"

(27) Van Horn,
p. 11

(28) 2d Div. Hist. and Company "H" on the east edge of Bois Luquet; (28) the Third Battalion took position in reserve in Bois du Fond de Limon. The 23rd Infantry held positions on our right, and the 1st Division was advancing on our left. These positions were reached early in the morning, and were held throughout the day.

OPERATIONS ON NOVEMBER 7TH

At 1:45 A.M., November 7th, this regiment was ordered to occupy Villemonty and le Fanbourg with one company each. In response to this order the Third Battalion, from its position in reserve, sent Company "K" with one

this situation our patrols worked around each flank and gradually silenced the enemy machine guns on our flanks. One of our 37 mm. guns took a position in an old barn at la Tuilerie Fme and fired with good effect on the machine guns on each side of the road, making several direct hits on this position. In this way parts of our line advanced from five to six hundred yards, where it was halted.

This action caused considerable losses in our regiment. The Machine Gun Company alone lost eighteen men in killed and wounded on this morning. In the Third Battalion there were only two officers left with the four companies, and the battalion adjutant was sent out to locate and reorganize one of these companies. Without attempting to advance farther, we reorganized as well as practicable under fire our skeletonized units and held the ground that was gained.

(25) 24 Div. Hist. Enemy reports and other conflicting reports state that this regiment was driven out of its position here and that la Tuilerie Fme was retaken by the enemy. (25) However, I personally know that this position was held by our regiment and I was either in this farmhouse or within a few hundred yards to the east of it from midnight of November 3 - 4th to about 2:00 A.M., November 6th. (26)

(26) Hilton

Enemy fire lessened during the afternoon, and on the night of November 4th the 23rd Infantry advanced through our position to Beaumont and Letame. Headquarters of this regiment was established at la Tuilerie Fme during the day.

(29) Beach,
Hilton

platoon of the Machine Gun Company of the regiment to Villemonty and Company "M" with another platoon of machine guns to le Faidbourg. These units started at 4:30 A.M. and reached the former mentioned town at 6:30 A.M. and the latter town at 7:30 A.M. (29) A detachment of the 26th Infantry was found in Villemonty (29) and a detachment of the 18th Infantry and 26th Infantry was found in le Faidbourg. The mission of our two companies was to prevent the enemy from crossing the river and to locate and protect any bridges remaining across the river in the vicinity of these places.

Both of the above mentioned towns were covered by enemy machine guns from the east bank of the Meuse. It was impossible to make any movement with safety in or around these towns in daylight. Several casualties were suffered by these units in attempting to keep up communication and supply by daylight.

OPERATIONS ON NOVEMBER 8TH

There was no change in the lines of this regiment during November 8th. Efforts were made to cross the Meuse between le Faidbourg and Mouzon, and for this purpose Companies "I" and "L" were moved into le Faidbourg after dark.

The crossing of this river at this time depended on the serviceability of the bridge connecting these towns. The enemy occupied Mouzon and at night placed machine guns at his end of the bridge to prevent our troops from crossing. At the least noise on our side of the river after darkness, these guns sprayed our area with fire, so we had been unable to reconnoiter the bridge.

On this night Major Yanda called for a squad of volunteers to reconnoiter this bridge and enter Mouzon and report the strength of the enemy there. In response to this call, Corporal Van Iersel of Company "M" volunteered for this hazardous task and got together a squad of German speaking volunteers to assist him. By cautiously moving forward this squad reached the edge of the river to find that the bridge had been dropped eight or ten feet to water level. In getting down to the bridge loose dirt falling from the banks brought enemy machine gun fire on them from the opposite bank. One member of the squad was killed by being struck in the abdomen by this fire. Corporal Van Iersel and the remainder of his squad continued on their mission and got as far as the center of the stream on the bridge when they discovered a trap. A section of the bridge broke loose and floated down the river carrying Corporal Van Iersel with it. The other volunteers returned and reported the trap and wire entanglements on the bridge and reported their corporal lost in the river. However, within an hour from this report, the corporal returned, wringing wet from swimming back, and reported the bridge impassable. For this act Corporal Van Iersel was recommended for, and later received, the Congressional Medal.

Upon receipt of this message and finding that it was not practicable to cross the river this night, the two companies were later sent back out of town to lessen casualties - which were heavy on account of constant shelling of this town by the enemy.

OPERATIONS ON NOVEMBER 9, 10 & 11TH

There was no change in our lines on the ninth.

This day was spent in reconnoitering and planning to cross the river. This regiment held the entire division front on the night of November 9 - 10th, while the 4th Brigade was attempting a crossing. (30)

(30) 2d Div. Hist.

On November 10th, about 7:00 P.M., Companies "G" and "H", of this regiment, assisted the 2nd Engineers in putting two bridges across the Meuse east of la Sartelle Fme. Two battalions of the 5th Marines had crossed by 11:30 P.M., and the First Battalion, 9th Infantry, followed in support of the Marine regiment about 4:15 A.M., November 11th. Company "D" led the battalion across and immediately sent a strong patrol to Pouilly, which found that a battalion of the 355th Infantry had taken the town. (31) The First Battalion then took up a position along the road east of the river in support of the 5th Marines who were near Moulins.

(31) 2d Div. Hist.

When the Armistice stopped hostilities at 11:00 A.M., November 11th, the 9th Infantry was disposed as follows: Headquarters at Beaumont; First Battalion east of the river occupying a line along the road from 307.8 - 311.0 to 308.5 - 311.8, in the order Companies "D", "C", "A" and "B", from right to left; Second Battalion in Bois de l'Hospice; Third Battalion in Villemonty and le Fainbourg and vicinity.

The casualties suffered by the 9th Infantry were as follows:

| | Killed | Wounded | Missing | Total |
|--------------|--------|---------|---------|-------|
| Officers | 4 | 19 | 0 | 23 |
| Enlisted Men | 150 | 750 | 62 | 962 |

(32) 9th Inf. Hist.
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Thus ended eleven days of successful campaigns by this regiment. This regiment entered the campaign with an effective strength of 2,600 men, less than the strength of any other like regiment in the division; it suffered more casualties, had less sick, and had more men present for duty at the end of the operation than any other like unit in the division. (32)

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISMS

The tactics employed by the 9th Infantry in marching by night into German territory on the nights of November 2-3, 3-4 and 5-6 were successful, but they might have been disastrous, had the enemy been more active and more determined. This column would have been helpless on the road if the enemy had discovered our plan and posted a few machine guns at any point along the road. These movements were bad tactics, but they worked successfully and no doubt saved several days hard fighting and many casualties through Bois de Belval.

The attack on the morning of November 4th, ^{I think} was a

~~completely successful operation, but due to lack of~~
support, our units were depleted and almost exhausted, there was not proper support on our flanks, and the enemy had organized his position during the night.

The operation, as a whole, was very successful. The enemy was fighting a strong delaying action to allow his units to withdraw across the Meuse. This information was the determining factor in ordering the night marches to pursue a retreating enemy.

LESSONS

The lessons to be learned from this campaign, as expressed in terms of the Principles of War, are set forth below.

(1) The Principle of the Objective was at all times adhered to - that of advancing into the enemy position, cause his withdrawal, and assist other units to cut enemy lines of communication and retreat.

(2) The Offensive was maintained throughout, and was made a vigorous offensive.

(3) Mass was always employed by placing battalions in column. The regiment had a front of one battalion while advancing.

(4) Economy of Forces was obtained by employing only one battalion at a time until it was necessary to employ two to advance. A reserve was always held out.

(5) The Principle of Movement was employed on the night marches, on the flank movements against enemy

(6) Surprise was well illustrated on each of the night marches which came as a complete surprise to the enemy and kept him nervous as to our next movements.

(7) Security was provided by our formations in depth and by our advance guards and flank guards.

(8) Simplicity was employed in all attacks. Attacks were made in most cases in column of battalions.

(9) Cooperation was employed between units in the regiment and with adjacent units. When one battalion was held up another was sent to extend the flanks or to advance through the one held up. Auxiliary weapons cooperated with rifle units.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(1) Q. What was the experience and training of the 9th Infantry prior to November 1st?

A. This regiment was a veteran one. It had participated in Battles of Chateau-Thierry, Soissons, St. Mihiel and Blanc Mont.

(2) Q. What was the enemy situation in front of this regiment on November 1st?

A. The enemy held the line St. Georges and Landres et St. Georges and was organized in depth for defense. There were no well organized positions but were well placed to utilize the strength of the ground.

(3) Q. What was the mission of the attack of November 1 - 11, 1918?

A. The mission of our forces was to cut enemy lines of communication and lines of retreat, forcing his surrender.

(4) Q. What formation did this regiment adopt for attack?

A. Column of battalions, two companies in attack and two in support.

(5) Q. How many night marches were made by this regiment and for what distances?

A. Three night marches. On night of November 2 - 3d about two kilometers; on night of 3 - 4th about eight kilometers; on night of 5 - 6th about four kilometers.

(6) Q. What was the object, or necessity, of these night marches?

A. Information was received that the enemy was rapidly withdrawing across the Meuse. These marches were made to allow a general advance to strike the enemy before

he had withdrawn across the river.

(7) Q. What, if any, resistance was met on these marches?

A. Enemy outposts were encountered and dislodged on November 2 - 3rd; on November 3 - 4th, outposts and rear position in course of preparation were encountered and dislodged; on November 5 - 6th practically no resistance.

(8) Q. How far did the entire attack advance?

A. About twenty-eight kilometers.

(9) Q. How was crossing of the Meuse effected?

A. By construction of two bridges by 2nd Engineers, assisted by two companies of 9th Infantry.

(10) Q. What was the disposition of this regiment when armistice became effective?

A. First Battalion was east of the Meuse; Second Battalion in Bois de l'Hospice on west bank; and Third Battalion in towns of Villemonty and le Pailbourg on west bank.

